

Sexual Slander and the 1965/66 Mass Killings in Indonesia: Political and Methodological Considerations

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ABSTRACT *Indonesia has been haunted by the “spectre of communism” since the putsch by military officers on 1 October 1965. That event saw the country’s top brass murdered and the military attributing this putsch to the Communist Party. The genocide that followed was triggered by a campaign of sexual slander. This led to the real coup and the replacement of President Sukarno by General Suharto. Today, accusations about communism continue to play a major role in public life and state control remains shored up by control over women’s bodies. This article introduces the putsch and the socialist women’s organisation Gerwani, members of which were, at the time, accused of sexual debauchery. The focus is on the question of how Gerwani was portrayed in the aftermath of the putsch and how this affects the contemporary women’s movement. It is found that women’s political agency has been restricted, being associated with sexual debauchery and social turmoil. State women’s organisations were set up and women’s organisations forced to help build a “stable” society, based on women’s subordination. The more independent women’s groups were afraid to be labelled “new Gerwani” as that would unleash strong state repression. This article assesses the implications of these events for the post-1998 period of Reformasi and reviews some recent analyses of 1965, state terrorism and violence and reveals blind spots in dealing with gender and sexual politics. It is argued that the slander against Gerwani is downplayed in these analyses. In fact, this slander was the spark without which the bloodbath would not have happened and would not have acquired its gruesome significance.*

KEY WORDS: Sexual politics, communism, nationalism, Indonesia, women’s movement, gender

In March 2009 campaigning for the parliamentary elections was in full swing. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a popular member of parliament and candidate for the Muslim party *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB or National Awakening Party), in addition to being a well-known human rights lawyer and feminist activist, was campaigning in the district of Banyuwangi, in East Java, unfamiliar territory for her.¹ Her adversaries mounted a gossip campaign, spreading the rumour that she defended the illegal *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI). The association this allegation was supposed to evoke was that she was an atheist, opposing the clerical elite of the

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region, fighting for women's interests and, in general, looking for trouble. These are serious issues, considering that the PKB is an offshoot of the *Nahdlatul Ulema* (NU), one of the two largest Muslim organisations in the country. Banyuwangi is considered one of NU's strongholds, with many Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) scattered across its vast area. The *kyai*, leaders of these *pesantren*, are the backbone of the NU. This was not the first time Nursyahbani Katjasungkana had been associated with the PKI or with one of its mass organisations. In December 1998, six months after the fall of General Suharto, the first national feminist conference since 1965 was held, in Yogyakarta. NKS, as she is popularly known, chaired the conference at which the Indonesian Women's Congress (*Kongres Perempuan Indonesia* or KPI) was established. This was the first feminist mass organisation since the destruction of *Gerwani*. At the time, NKS was accused of being "*Gerwani baru*" or a new *Gerwani* member. That term was reiterated by the then Minister of Women's Affairs, Tuti Alifiah in a Cabinet meeting in 1999, where she discussed her worries about the establishment of the KPI (NKS, personal communication, April 2009).

Only a few months earlier, when General Suharto was still in power, such an accusation could land one in serious trouble. But even in December 1999, with *reformasi* proclaimed, mention of *Gerwani* caused considerable unrest. At the congress, Ibu Sulami, a former secretary of the national leadership of *Gerwani*, spoke about *Gerwani*, its history and destruction. This was the first time Ibu Sulami had addressed a public meeting, having been imprisoned for 17 years.² Many participants were shocked by what she said, having believed the absurd lies the Suharto regime had spread about *Gerwani*'s alleged involvement in the murder of the generals who were killed in the early morning of 1 October 1965.³ Because of the presence of Ibu Sulami, the delegates of *Aisyah*, the women's organisation of the *Muhammadiyah*, the other large Indonesian Muslim mass organisation, withdrew in protest.

Few events have impacted Indonesian modern history more deeply than the mass murders of 1965/66 which eventually led to the establishment of the New Order under President Suharto. Yet what triggered these mass murders has mostly been hidden under deep layers of fear, guilt, horror and shame. Clearly the trauma of the "events of 1965," as they are commonly referred to, is still playing an important role in the national imagination. Other than in countries like South Africa, Chile, Cambodia, Argentina and Rwanda, where processes of truth finding have led to some reconciliation, in Indonesia there still has not been a national process aimed at finding truth.⁴ Many issues remain unclear, such as the role Suharto himself played and the extent of the genocide unleashed by the military assisted by religious and, in some cases, conservative nationalist forces. At the local level, some careful efforts at reconciliation are being made by the members of *Syarikat Islam* (Muslim Association), set up in Yogyakarta in 2003. This process means that young people are being confronted with the mysterious pasts of their parents which have created insurmountable rifts between the families of the killers and of their victims. At the very emotional meeting when *Syarikat Islam* was launched, members of *Ansor*, the youth movement of the NU, confessed to having butchered PKI members in 1965/66. In tears they declared they thought they had been doing the right thing at the time, "cleansing" society from the perceived communist evil. In any case, they said, they had had little choice as they had acted under threat of the military.⁵

The hatred and fear of *Gerwani* are still so strong that the shooting of *Lastri*, a film based on a series of interviews with ex-*Gerwani* members, but with a more romantic fictional story line, was prohibited (Nadia, 2007). Early in 2009, after protests by members of the Surakarta branch of the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI or Muslim Defender's Front) a right-wing Muslim militia group, the mayor of that city forbade Eros Djarot, the director, to shoot the film on location. The arguments used by the FPI were that the film would violate the rights of the Muslim community. The film was seen to be part of a propaganda strategy to create sympathy for communism. A press statement published by the FPI declared further that this was a similar propaganda strategy as the Jews used to enhance sympathy for Israel by stressing the suffering of the many Holocaust victims. The FPI noted that films have a great potential to sway the minds of people, particularly when they contain a love story. FPI strongly opposed the views of the director that the present beliefs of what happened at Lubang Buaya, the field where the army officers were killed, were just a fairy tale.⁶ As will be explained, *Gerwani* members present when the generals were murdered were falsely accused of sexually torturing them. The film tried to debunk these fabrications. The inhabitants of Karanganyar, where the shooting of the film was to take place, joined the protests and demanded that permission for the filming be withdrawn.⁷ Later, students of the Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam Bogor (HMI Bogor or Muslim Students Union) expressed their solidarity with the protesters. Using a phrase from the New Order, they feared, so they declared, that the film would stir up the "latent danger" of the PKI (*Jurnal Bogor*, 19 December 2008).

Reformasi is apparently not such a clean break as many had hoped at the time. Old wounds were not suddenly healed; democracy and truth did not emerge out of the toxic moral morass of the New Order. Old ghosts continue to haunt Indonesian society. The association of communism with atheism, the destruction of the family, women's declining sexual morals and a loss of social harmony persists to this very day. Communism is still prohibited. An attempt to legitimise communist thought failed in the *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (MPR or People's Consultative Assembly) in August 2003. When NU chairman Abdulrahman Wahid (popularly known as Gus Dur) became president, he suggested that the ban on communism be lifted and that the former members of the party be allowed to vote, a right that had been denied them since 1965. Immediately, on 8 April 2000, a mass demonstration organised by the *Front Umat Islam Indonesia* (FUII or Front of the Indonesian Muslim Community) marched to the presidential palace, burning the PKI flag. One of their banners read: "We are confused! We love Gus (Dur) but we hate communism and Zionism" (*Jakarta Post*, 8 April 2000).

In Medan and Jambi similar demonstrations were held. In Jambi three demands were formulated: continue the ban on communism, no restoration of diplomatic ties with Israel and an end to prostitution (*Kompas*, 8 April 2000). It was no surprise that when the proposal to lift the ban came to the vote in the MPR, it was defeated. Only the PDI-P (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* or Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle), the party led by Sukarno's daughter Megawati Sukarnoputri, declared it was unjust that people associated with the PKI still could not vote (*Kompas*, 2 August 2003). When the issue of the voting rights of people associated with the PKI again was discussed in the MPR in 2004, strong opposition was voiced by an uncle of Abdulrahman Wahid, *kyai* Yusuf Hasyim, the leader of a big *pesantren* in Jombang.

He said he was supported by many *kyai*, as they had experienced the “terror and intimidation and even the violence [of the PKI] towards the *pesantren*” (*Tempo Interaktif*, 4 March 2004).

Opposition to anybody or anything associated with the PKI, and with *Gerwani* in particular, is less strident than during the Old Order, when anything associated with liberalism, activism and human and women’s rights was considered “communist depravity.” But, as Heryanto (2006: 9) rightly maintains, present-day Indonesian society cannot be understood without reference to the impact of the events of 1965 as these events continue to have a hold on people’s minds and in society at large. Suharto and his allies were able to maintain their grip on the country and terrorised many for so long by constantly reviving the spectre of communism and this has deeply influenced the texture of Indonesian society.

Within this system of domination, the defamation of women’s sexuality, based on the association of progressive women with unspeakable acts of debauchery, has played a large role in triggering the genocide of 1965/66. It stands to reason, then, that scholarship would pay attention to these issues and to gender issues more broadly. While there were many mass organisations associated with the PKI, its women’s organisation was the object of most hatred. Former members of the Peasant Unions, for instance, who had carried contentious actions for land reform about which the *kyai* were incensed, were not similarly reviled. Nor were the members of the party’s Youth Wing – some of whom had contributed limited support to the plotters – the subject of such hatred and vilification. All through the New Order the word *Gerwani* was associated with allegedly unspeakable sexual perversions. People lowered their voices when referring to the “evil mothers of *Gerwani*.” The police treated women activists harshly and often sexualised their violence against them.⁸ It took enormous courage for women to set up the first feminist organisations in the 1980s, such as *Yasanti* in Yogyakarta in 1982, *Kalyanamitra* in Jakarta (1984) and, in the early 1990s, groups such as *Solidaritas Perempuan* and *Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan* (APIK or Indonesian Women’s Association for Justice), as women’s political activism was still associated with moral depravity.⁹

Schoolbooks still echo the army version of history that has the army saving the nation from the treacherous communists (McGregor, 2005; McGregor, 2007). In 2007 new schoolbooks were produced in which this army version was contested. However, this effort met with strong protests from political forces associated with the previous regime and the new books were collected and burnt. The order for this was given by the country’s then Attorney General, Abdul Rahman Saleh; it was widely rumoured that President General Yudhoyono might be involved in this action, as his father-in-law, Colonel Sarwo Edhie, was the main executioner of the genocide.¹⁰ After the 1 October 1965 *putsch* the government went all out to associate any kind of resistance to the army with communism, feminism, sexual depravity and violence, even producing a film, which was compulsory viewing for school children on many occasions, such as Independence Day, and a novel on the topic (Heryanto, 2006: 7-9).

The Sexual Politics of 1965/66

What triggered this *putsch* which ultimately led to the complete transformation of Indonesian society? In short: on the night of 1 October 1965 three officers, supported

by a few troops in Jakarta, wiped out the country's top brass, apart from General Suharto and General Nasution, who was wounded. The perpetrators were self-proclaimed leftist officers who said they acted to protect President Sukarno. They apparently wanted to abduct the right-wing generals and counted on the support of President Sukarno. However, they botched the operation; the abducted generals were killed and their bodies hidden in a well (see Roosa, 2006). They were supported by a few top members of the Communist Party which, as a whole, was not informed. Some members of the youth movement of the Communist Party were employed to guard strategic buildings around Freedom Square in Jakarta. Women were not involved and were never indicted in the trials that followed (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). The *putsch* collapsed within one day, and General Suharto, who surprisingly was not captured, gained control over the army. Afterwards a campaign of sexual slander was launched with the help of army newspapers (the only newspapers still permitted) and the national radio. This slander claimed members of the communist women's organisation, *Gerwani*, were accused of having killed and castrated the generals. A genocide followed, the dimensions of which have never been fully uncovered. Probably over a million people were massacred.¹¹ Thereafter the power of the then President Sukarno was so weakened that in March 1966 he was forced to hand over power to the general behind the mass murders, Suharto. In 1967, Suharto was formally installed as president. Thus, the *putsch* was not a real *coup*, it was only the prelude to the slow but exceedingly bloody campaign that destabilised and ultimately unseated Sukarno (Roosa, 2006; Wieringa, 1995).

It is important to understand the background to the *putsch*. By mid-1965, tensions in Indonesian society were reaching a climax. In the countryside the actions of the *Barisan Tani Indonesia* (BTI or the Indonesian Peasants' Front), which demanded the rapid implementation of the recently introduced land reform laws, had thoroughly disturbed social relations. Particularly the *kyai* of large *pesantren* were inflamed, as they had extensive landholdings and had been the objects of many of the "unilateral actions" of the BTI. Rising levels of inflation caused increased poverty, particularly in urban areas. The relationship between the army leaders and conservative religious, mainly Muslim, groups on the one hand and the PKI on the other, became increasingly tense, with President Sukarno leaning more than ever towards the PKI side. Only he seemed able to keep the competing factions together. The PKI was particularly worried that Sukarno might not be able to continue to protect them in view of the six assassination attempts which had been made on him (May, 1978). The PKI had been flexing its muscles in staging large mass demonstrations (Roosa, 2006). Meanwhile, right-wing forces, led by the army, had been quietly building a mass base, which its main organiser, Brigade General Djuhartono, claimed was larger than that of the "PKI family."¹² Declassified CIA documents analysed by Simpson provide further insight into how the right-wing military prepared itself for a showdown with the PKI (cited in Roosa, 2006).

In this tense situation several middle-ranking officers of the army, led by Colonel Untung, staged a military *putsch*. They wanted, so they testified later, to protect the President against plans of an alleged Council of Generals, which, so they had come to believe, intended to overthrow Sukarno on Army Day falling on 5 October (Latief, 2000). Also, they were discontented with the corrupt and decadent lifestyle of some of those generals, in particular Yani (Crouch, 1978: 38-42). Their plans were

vaguely discussed in several meetings of the PKI politburo, during which some limited, but only political, support was promised to the plotters (Mortimer, 1974: 392-4). Roosa (2006) has convincingly argued that party leader Aidit was the only one in the official party organisation who was in contact with the Special Bureau, headed by Sjam, who was tasked with contacting officers supportive of the PKI. Aidit never fully informed the other members of the politburo. Even so, Aidit had mentioned that he was about to organise a “shortcut” to PKI ideals (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). Roosa (2006) recently speculated on the adventurism of Aidit which made him fall with open eyes into the trap set by the generals who had been waiting for just such a move of the PKI in order to attack the party. Miscommunication between Sjam and Aidit, on the one hand, and the officers, on the other, may account for the extraordinary clumsiness with which the *putsch* was executed.

In the early morning of 1 October 1965, six generals and one lieutenant (who was picked up instead of the main target of the plotters, General Nasution) were killed and their bodies were thrown into a deep well known as *Lubang Buaya* (Crocodile Hole), at a training field for volunteers of the Malaysia *Konfrontasi* campaign, which had been mostly used by volunteers of the PKI-affiliated youth organisation and the women’s organisation *Gerwani*. The field belonged to the air force.

Before the day was out General Suharto’s forces had managed to cajole and threaten half of the rebel forces into submission (Crouch, 1978: Chapter 4). In the meantime, President Sukarno had decided not to appoint General Suharto, who was next in line to replace the murdered Chief of Staff, General Yani, possibly because he considered him too strong-willed (Anderson and McVey, 1971). Instead he appointed the more junior General Pranoto Reksosamudro. Infuriated, Suharto ignored the orders of his President. He issued his own radio announcement that he had taken over the army leadership to restore security and order (Crouch, 1978: 132). Two weeks later Sukarno was compelled to replace Pranoto with Suharto. The propaganda campaign, the massacre and mass detainment followed.

How to interpret these events? The army immediately declared that the PKI was the *dalang* (puppeteer) behind the *coup*, through its Special Bureau, headed by Sjam. The fullest account of the army view is given by Notosutanto and Saleh (1968). The PKI, on the other hand, maintained initially that it was purely an intra-military affair. This version was supported abroad by a paper circulated since 1966 authored by Anderson and McVey (1971), two social scientists from Cornell University. A third interpretation is that Suharto and possibly the CIA were behind a conspiracy to break the power of the PKI. Holzappel (1979), Scott (1985) and Wertheim (1979; 1991) have elaborated this view. This interpretation stresses the class aspects of both the *coup* and the propaganda campaign which followed it, pointing out that most victims fell in the areas where peasant unrest had been heaviest. Crouch (1978: Chapter 4) suggested the PKI played a role in what was basically an intra-army affair but gave little support for his view.

Recent research by Roosa (2006), based on an analysis of court documents, recently declassified CIA papers and some interviews, fills in many of the details that earlier researchers missed. His conclusion is that Aidit and Sjam were fully involved; Sjam carried the major responsibility as he was directly in contact with the military officers Untung, Latief and Supardjo. Between all of them, mainly through lack of communication and clumsy planning, the whole project was bungled. The army,

which had long waited for an opportunity to attack the PKI and had prepared for that with the help of the CIA, grabbed its chance and began destroying the PKI (Roosa, 2006).

However, this interpretation still has major gaps. One is the role of General Suharto. It is not clear why Suharto was not captured with the other senior soldiers. If the plotters believed he would condone their action, as Latief (2000) suggested in his memoirs, they were thoroughly mistaken. Second, how was it that General Nasution and General Pranoto were sidestepped by Suharto? Third, if, as Roosa (2006: 22 and 178) suggests, the plans for an attack on the PKI had already been prepared beforehand, why was it three weeks before the killing started? Fourth, Roosa (2006: 29 and 198-200) refers to the psychological warfare the army staged, and mentions that the stories of castrations were a lie. He ignores the fact that it was sexual slander that was used in the campaign and that it was associated with women. The peasant and the youth movement were more directly involved as political actors prior to the *putsch*, but they were not slandered. What is the power of sexual politics in Indonesia that made these lies so effective? And who concocted them?

In my earlier analysis of the post-independence women's movement in Indonesia (Wieringa, 1995), I focused on *Gerwani*, the campaign they were subjected to and the role Suharto might have played. On the basis of interviews, I mostly agreed with Crouch's analysis that the *putsch* was an intra-military affair with support from some members of the PKI politburo (Crouch, 1979). I focused on Suharto's critical role not so much in the *putsch* itself, of which he was probably merely informed, but particularly in the subsequent "real" *coup*, the taking over of power from the nation's leader, President Sukarno. Suharto has shown himself to be a ruthless and very ambitious man and a person able to wait patiently for the right moment to strike. The information he had received from his friend Latief (and possibly through his own intelligence) may have convinced him that the *coup* was so clumsily planned, with so little actual support that it would be too risky to support it, while it could very easily be put down (see Latief, 2000). He would then come out as the great saviour of the nation and Sukarno would have had no other choice than to appoint him Chief of Staff instead of the abducted Yani.¹³ The start of the propaganda campaign which formed this second, "real" *coup*, the contours of which may have long been sketched by the army, as Roosa (2006) suggests, may have been when Sukarno appointed another officer to temporary Army Chief instead, which humiliated and enraged Suharto and made him realise that his only access to power lay in the removal of Sukarno. And that, in order to replace the President, his most powerful support group at the time, the communists, had to be destroyed (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). Why else would Suharto defy the President's orders to obey Pranoto? If, as Roosa (2006) suggests, the struggle was only between communist and anti-communist forces, Pranoto could have done the job of destroying the PKI as well as any other general, as could General Nasution who was wounded but escaped being abducted. Suharto thus had to come up with a plan. The situation was extremely tense and he devised a plan which I maintain served as the spark for the powder keg, the volatile economic and political condition of the time. He thus created a situation of cosmic disorder, which in the Javanese mind, could be set straight only by ritual cleansing, which the army efficiently engineered.

Demonising Communist Women: The “Real” Coup and Suharto’s Rise

Based on research conducted in the early 1980s, my reconstruction of what actually happened at Lubang Buaya is the following. On the day of the event, some 70 women, most of them young girls from the communist youth organisation, others from the trade union and the farmers’ front, and a few *Gerwani* members, including some wives of soldiers, were assembled at Lubang Buaya for the anti-Malaysia Campaign. At the last moment a few *Gerwani* cadres and some non-*Gerwani* wives of the *Cakrabirawa* palace guards, soldiers absolutely loyal to Sukarno, had been called up to join the women and girls. A few of them were given the task of sewing stripes on uniforms, presumably for members of the youth wing who had been assigned roles to support the alleged left-wing conspirators. But they had no idea why they had to sew new stripes on uniforms. This activity should have been carried out much earlier, for the youths should have received their shirts before coming into action. This late allocation of tasks fits with Roosa’s (2006) analysis of the poor planning of the whole adventure.

The plotters could make use of Lubang Buaya as it was under the control of the air force, which was antagonistic to the conservative army staff and brought their victims there. *Gerwani* as an organisation was left out of the plans.¹⁴ What happened then? Where did the wild accusations come from that were later hurled at them of “naked, sexual dancing,” of having “severed the penises of the generals” and of the generals having their “eyes gouged out?” How did the generals die (Anderson, 1987)? From interviews conducted with surviving leaders of *Gerwani* and with women who were present at Lubang Buaya, the following account is the most likely.¹⁵ In the early morning of 1 October, the girls and women were woken up by shouts. It was still dark outside and they were all frightened. They ran to the open space where they saw a group of soldiers dragging the kidnapped generals, some of whom had already been killed. The soldiers hit the generals and finally the ones still alive were shot and all bodies were thrown into a well. The soldiers were enraged – they even rained bullets on their victims when they were already dead. Terrorised, the girls and women ran back to Jakarta, most to their homes, others to the headquarters of *Gerwani*, where Ibu Sujinah and Ibu Sulami, who were secretaries of the organisation as single women, usually slept. Their slumber was disturbed by the banging on their office doors. That was the first time any of the *Gerwani* leadership heard anything about generals being abducted and some *putsch* taking place, as none of them were present at Lubang Buaya in that fateful night.

The training at Lubang Buaya was meant to be routine. Nobody interviewed found anything strange in the fact that a few extra volunteers were called up to perform tasks for the youth organisation. The whole “PKI family” at that time was used to being mobilised for mass actions or other activities.

Afterwards, the army media began circulating stories about dancing, alleged sexual perversions and the cutting off of penises. In fact, the army went to great lengths to construct the stories they decided to circulate. Witnesses were quoted in the only newspapers allowed to appear, and photographs were shown. There were television broadcasts and radio programmes on the “horrors” said to have been committed at Lubang Buaya. How did the military go about that?

The girls and women at Lubang Buaya were arrested and released several times during the first weeks of October, although nobody seemed to be able to come up

with any accusations. This puts into doubt the careful planning the army and the CIA had been doing in their hope the PKI would be so stupid as to do exactly what Aidit and Sjam had cooked up with the few officers who carried out the military part in the night of 1 October, as Roosa (2006) asserts. Ultimately, in an as yet unidentified process, the idea of accusing the girls and women of sexual mutilation was conceived, the young women who were captured were horribly tortured, sexually molested, gang raped and then forced to say “yes” to anything their torturers wanted them to testify.¹⁶ A volunteer girl present at Lubang Buaya told me that she was forced to undress in prison and to dance naked in front of her torturers while they took pictures (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). These shots were later used to “prove” the girls had been dancing naked some weeks earlier.¹⁷

The campaign of slander against the women had a slow start. While the autopsy results had become available to the authorities, they were not made public. The autopsy demonstrated that the wounds found on the bodies of the dead generals and lieutenant were either gunshots, or resulted from heavy, dull traumas, possibly caused by clubbing with the butts of guns or the damage likely to occur from a fall into a deep well. The genitals of the generals were intact, all eyes were in place, and there were no traces of cuts with razors. As General Suharto himself had ordered the report to be prepared and had signed it, with President Sukarno, it is unlikely that he had not been informed of its results before the burial of the dead (Anderson, 1987).

A first indication that some gruesome plan was being hatched was a story in the *Berita Yuddha* of 11 October 1965. It reported on the condition of the bodies of the generals from the well. Contrary to what the autopsy revealed, the newspaper wrote that “eyes had been gouged out, and of some generals had had their genitals cut off.” This story was the beginning of one of the most effective mass campaigns intended to spread terror since the Second World War. Other army-derived reports tell of women dancing naked and of young women committing sexual acts with the generals (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2003a). Spurred on by the army, the campaign got underway; the slogans of students and other groups who were demonstrating against the PKI and Sukarno included *Gerwani Tjabul* (*Gerwani Whores*), *Gantung Gerwani* (*Hang Gerwani*) and *Ganjang Gerwani* (*Crush Gerwani*).

Islamic leaders soon joined the chorus. *Muhammadiyah* declared that the “extermination of the Gestapu/PKI and the Nekolim (neo-colonialist forces) is an obligatory religious duty” (Boland, 1982: 146). This call for a “holy war” was subsequently echoed by many Muslim leaders, who justified the killings of the communists as “the will of Allah” (see Cribb, 1990; Schwarz, 1994). An agreement was drawn up between NU leaders and the army that the youth movement, *Ansor*, and its armed wing, *Banser*, would support the army in its extermination of leftists. The late mother of former President Wahid, Solichah A. Wahid Hasyim, was particularly active in this respect. The agreement was signed by her, and concluded at her house (interview, Khairul (pseud.), NU activist, April 2007).¹⁸ The NU had long prepared for this role. Recently, it has become known that Yusuf Hasyim, a younger brother of Gus Dur, had been studying Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* in order to find out how youth groups could be organised most effectively.¹⁹ The NU women’s wing, *Muslimat*, joined the aggression against anything related to *Gerwani*. In Jakarta, for instance, Aisyah Baidhuri, a sister of Gus Dur and a member of parliament, joined in

the destruction of the *Melati* kindergartens which had been set up by *Gerwani* (Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, personal communication).²⁰

More lurid reports followed, implicating *Gerwani* members as having prostituted themselves routinely for PKI leaders on the instigation of PKI chairman Aidit.²¹ It is striking that, following their “confessions,” none of the women who had been present at Lubang Buaya and who had been detained was ever brought to court.²² In December, the campaign lost its vigour. Most of the killing in Java had been done, although in Bali the worst killing took place in the second half of December 1965 (Robinson, 1995; Robinson, 1996). And many were to perish in overcrowded prisons where they were detained under inhumane conditions.

Creation of Disorder

What kind of an organisation was *Gerwani*? In the national revolution (1945-49) women’s political participation was welcomed. Sukarno called the women’s movement the “second wheel” on the chariot of the national revolution (Sukarno, 1963). Thereafter, though, they were expected to return to the “kitchen, bed, and well,” (*dapur, kasur, sumur*, the three spaces where women were supposed to excel, according to traditional gender ideology). *Gerwani*, however, insisted that women still had another revolution to fight: freedom from subordination as women and for their right to act in the political arena. As members of the “left family,” for instance, they assisted farmers, male and female, imprisoned for their involvement in the farmers’ movement and women workers. In large demonstrations they protested the deplorable economic situation. They campaigned tirelessly against violence against women. They called themselves “progressive” women. The organisation was never formally associated with the PKI but, when they were forced in early 1965 to align themselves with one or another party, they had decided to formally join the “PKI family.” That decision was to be ratified at their December 1965 congress, which due to the political upheaval, never took place (Wieringa, 2002). *Gerwani*’s political and social activities earned them the reputation of trouble-makers with the more traditional women’s organisations, and with conservative groups in general, particularly the Muslim establishment.

The significance of the campaign of sexual slander against *Gerwani* lies in the deliberate manipulation of the collective cultural and religious conscience of the Indonesian population. This manipulation involved the deliberate creation of the disorder on which Suharto built his road to power. Suharto (1966) wrote explicitly that “a mental transition” had been required in a pamphlet that appeared a year after the *putsch*. Because of Sukarno’s great popularity and the large following of the PKI, which strongly supported President Sukarno, it was not an easy task to eliminate the PKI. Yet it was necessary, Suharto felt, to destroy the party as that would be the only way to discredit the President. Another reason to go slowly and to first prepare the required “mental transition” is put forward by Suharto (1991) in his autobiography. He explains that a military *coup* would have been much faster, but that such drastic action might have entailed the danger of a counter-*coup*. It seems that a climate of disorder was deliberately created to exploit the deep anxieties of a population, which was already badly shaken by political and socio-economic tensions. This disorder struck chords with the people’s fear of the uncontrolled

sexual powers of women, a religiously inspired apprehension that women's disobedience would endanger the entire social system, Hindu notions of all-female maniacal crowds and a male horror of castration (Mernissi, 1985; Tiwon, 1996). Islamic youth groups, mainly NU's *Banser* and *Ansor*, assisted the army and especially the troops of Colonel Edhie in Java. Edhie, later to become the father-in-law of President Yudhoyono, was in charge of the elimination of the PKI and its mass organisations (Crouch, 1978; Robinson, 1995). In other places, especially in Bali, members of the conservative wing of the PNI were involved as well. Hindu Balinese saw the killing of people associated with the PKI "as the fulfilment of a religious obligation to purify the land" (Robinson, 1995: 300). Robinson argues that the killings in Bali were spurred by a campaign mounted by the local military and police authorities. In the building of German fascism, too, the exploitation of (male) sexual fears played an important role (see Theweleit, 1987). In general, control over women's bodies and sexuality is an important tool for nation building (Mosse, 1985; Wieringa, 2003a; Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Sexual Politics and Suharto's New Order

In March 1966, General Suharto knew the time was ripe for him to wrest power from President Sukarno.²³ For the next 30 years the New Order state waged a campaign of sexual imagining – posing the government against “communist whores” – a crusade aimed at presenting the army under Suharto as the virile saviours of a nation on the brink of destruction. Long after the PKI had been destroyed in one of the bloodiest transitions to power in modern times, the spectre of communism, especially as animated by its women, was still called upon to justify the harsh repression of any democratic anti-government forces. As Enloe (1990: 45) wrote, “nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope.” Masculine memories, hopes and humiliations often centre around women's sexuality. Their “own” women's chastity has to be defined and protected, while the “other” women are either constructed as objects of rape or they are disciplined in other ways. This had wide ramifications in society, the association of evil with its dark sexual undercurrent also extended to many cultural sectors. In Java, many performers of traditional art forms were also affected. This was because the “PKI family” had its own cultural association, LEKRA, members of which supported the PKI's ideological struggles. As a PKI-associated organisation LEKRA and its members would anyhow be persecuted in the general massacre. However, as Agung Putri, director of ELSAM (*Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat* or Foundation for the study and advocacy of society), asserted during a seminar at the office of the National Human Rights Commission. (15 April 2010), citing the analysis of Dr Rachmi Larasati, LEKRA was specifically targeted, and the sexual savagery which was created around *Gerwani* helped in this campaign against them.²⁴

Sexual politics thus underlay the construction of the New Order regime. Sexual politics deal with the moral, sexual, symbolic, cultural and political codes in which individuals, families and the nation are linked, and with the interplay between sexed and gendered bodies and the socio-political realm. In Indonesia the *putsch* of 1 October 1965 unleashed a bitter struggle in which the military version of family life

and state power prevailed over that of another patriarchal force, the Communist Party. In the process the communist “revolutionary” family was wiped out and the military family form, built on an excessively masculine power obsessed with control and women’s submission, became the dominant one. Women were no longer defined as comrades in the revolutionary struggle, but as submissive wives and devoted mothers. Suharto became the super-patriarch, as Father of the Development Family he wanted his New Order state to be.

Clash of Masculinities

In this clash of masculinities both sides had their own version of the ideal family. The PKI had built a hybrid construct called the “Manipol” family, composed of nationalist-Sukarnoist and socialist rhetoric. The word “Manipol” comes from *Manifesto Politik*, Sukarno’s 1959 Independence Day speech. Women in these Manipol families supported their men as revolutionary fighters for a bright socialist future, while struggling along in their own women’s organisation, *Gerwani*, which also claimed a role in the national political arena. The women combined political, socialist and nationalist activities with their duties in the household (Wieringa, 2002).

In Suharto’s Development state women were responsible for the strict obedience of the family as a whole to the patriarchal, authoritarian national ideology Suharto imposed on the nation (Blackburn, 2004a; Suryakusuma, 1996; Wieringa, 1985). For this project women’s sexuality had to be controlled and state-controlled women’s organisations had to be set up in order to ensure that women behaved with the required obedience. The legitimacy of the New Order state thus rested largely on the measure of control it exercised both over its “own” women, as well as over the “abject” communist women and the “enemy” men who were portrayed as being responsible for the “perverse,” “inhuman,” “primitive” behaviour of “their” women. These abject women were so powerless that even after they had been released they could be used as sexual slaves (Nadia, 2007; Susanti, 2006). Throughout Suharto’s rule the PKI was associated with these two words: *penghianat* (“traitor”) and *biadab* (“savage”). The PKI was thus excluded from the nation and even from humanity as such. The alleged “savagery” of the PKI rested in large part on the accusations of sexual debauchery of women associated with the party.

The regime tried to keep the fantasy it had created alive by building an enormous museum, called “*Museum Penghianatan* (Betrayal) PKI,” on the site where the generals were murdered. It contains huge murals of photographs, composed of pictures taken, amongst other places, at the well of Lubang Buaya. Strikingly, the pictures of the bodies of the generals, terrible as they are, show no signs of razor blade cuts, and there are no bloody patches on the places where the castrations should have taken place. All the crotches, as far as visible, are intact. The uniforms of the murdered generals, also on display in a room of the same building, show no damage where castrations would have taken place, while the blood from shot wounds in other parts of their bodies is visible (see Wieringa, 2002).

The monument on the same site is called “*Monumen Pancasila Sakti* (sacred) *Lubang Buaya*.” It is a huge semi-circular construction in front of a pillar and a statue of the Garuda, the national bird. Statues of the slain generals and lieutenant in a vigorous attitude, and in full military attire, are placed on a platform. Below them

the history of Indonesia since 1945, according to Suharto, is presented in a mural. It is here that the full ideological weight of the way the New Order regime was built on the subordination of women and the manipulation of sexual symbols becomes clear (Wieringa, 2002; Wieringa, 2003a; McGregor, 2007). The central part of the mural is devoted to the events at Lubang Buaya (Figure 1). The generals are being clubbed and thrown into the well. They are surrounded by representations of women. To the left three women are standing. One of them is dressed in a sexual manner and argues defiantly with a man. The arguing couple is very ugly. Beside her two dancing women are arranged, one of whom has a wreath of flowers (representing the so-called "Dance of the Fragrant Flowers," by means of which the unfortunate generals were allegedly seduced).

Above the well one woman is portrayed leaning against a tree. She is clad in uniform trousers and a blouse that clearly reveals her full breasts. A knife is stuck in her belt. Her posture again is defiant. More to the right the scene is dominated by the overpowering figure of General Suharto. Under his left arm two women are standing, heads down, attitude demure, one of them is carrying a baby. The figure of General Suharto has intervened and turned those defiant, seductive, dangerous and castrating women into the very symbols of obedience and motherhood. The last scene shows the all-powerful General and President Suharto in front of what is presumably a courtroom. Absolute military and legal power is his.

The central element of the ideological fury unleashed around women's involvement in the murders of Lubang Buaya is that *Gerwani* in its "communist," "perverted" madness had the major hand in torturing and killing the generals, dancing naked and cutting off their penises. The clash of masculinities that formed the core of the internecine struggle between a patriarchal army and a differently patriarchal communist party was played out over women's bodies. The male, militarised honour was constructed as being defamed by communist women and *Gerwani*'s rebellious women were demonised. The control over women's sexuality thus became a matter of prime national concern.²⁵

As the army was victorious, a militarised masculinity obsessed with control over abject forms of masculinity became the hegemonic ideological force in the New Order state. The femininity that went with that model entailed a return to a conservative *kodrat wanita* (women's code of conduct), referring to the well-known shadow play figure of the meek, obedient Sumbadra, in contrast to the *wayang* figure adopted by *Gerwani*, the warrior-princess Srikandi.²⁶ Those women who had been branded as "communist" or who had somehow been caught up in the cruel aftermath of the "events of 1965" were tainted as abject. Even today, 45 years after the *putsch*, it is meant as a deep insult to be branded "new *Gerwani*," as happened to Nusyabani Katjasungkana.

Reformation or Restoration?

Can we really speak of a period of "*reformasi*" (reformation), as the present political post-1998 elite claims? School books that question the army version of 1965 are burnt, the making of a film on *Gerwani* is sabotaged and book bannings are back, including the book by Roosa on the 1965 plot. The women survivors of the genocide against the left prefer to live together in old-age homes, as they do not want to



Figure 1. The dance of the fragrant flowers, Monument Pancasila Sakti, Jakarta. *Source:* Author's photograph.

embarrass their grandchildren by having a former *Gerwani* member living with them, as one of them, Ibu Lestari, explained in an interview (15 April 2010). The association of *Gerwani* with prostitution is still alive. As Agung Putri, who courageously attempted community reconciliation for many years, said, “their families don’t dare to be honest about who their mothers were, and the mothers also are afraid to announce their identities” (*Kompas*, 23 April 2010). The launch of the Indonesian version of the author’s 2002 book *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* on 15 April 2010 had to be announced with great circumspection (Wieringa, 2010). The launch was to be accompanied by a television programme, hosted by Kick Andy, on Metro TV, but that was cancelled two days prior to the event due to fears that the strongly anti-communist and anti-gay Muslim militia *Front Pembela Islam* (Muslim Defenders’ Front) might become involved (communication from Stanley Ruhoro, commissioner, National Human Rights Commission). The preview of the film by Maj Wechselmann, entitled “The Women and the Generals,” which took place at the same event, could not be publicly announced, as the organising committee also feared the *Front Pembela Islam*. As Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a former member of parliament who spoke at the event, maintained, the “Indonesian state still allows the continuation of this physical, psychological and symbolic violence, and thus causes a silence in which the civil rights of millions of its citizens are still denied” (*Kompas*, 23 April 2010). With the police unwilling to defend human rights activists, and the rise to power of several prominent generals known to be involved in human

right violations, I suggest that the 1998 reformation period has turned into a regime in which increasingly old powers are restoring their influence (see Robison and Hadiz, 2004). In this process of restoration, sexual politics again play an important role. Hard-line Islamic groups, such as the *Front Pembela Islam* and the conservative *Majelis Ulema Islam* (Muslim Clerics Council or MUI), but also many regional parties and groups, increasingly base their claims on legitimacy and their bids for political power on control over women's behaviour and dress codes, various forms of control over sexuality in general, and over women's sexuality, in particular (see Katjasungkana, forthcoming). Indonesian women's groups fight this growing influence, which they attribute to the growth of an alien, "Arabic" form of Islam (Wieringa, 2009). Particularly the proliferation of regional by-laws since the beginning of *reformasi*, the so-called *perda* (*peraturan daerah* lit regional by-laws, *qanun* in Aceh, the only part of the country in which Islamic law is allowed) contains several articles which control women's bodies and sexuality and violate the country's national laws (Noerdin et al., 2005). State officials and senior politicians seem unwilling to confront these violations of the constitution. The legal situation for women is worsening. The most recent examples are the review of the request for a judicial review of the 2008 anti-pornography law in which women's bodies are targeted and the 2009 health law which contains various clauses that restrict women's control over their own bodies.²⁷

Conclusion: Role of Scholars

Do scholars of Indonesia pay sufficient attention to gender analysis in this political process? The above analysis bears on a number of topics that are hotly debated among scholars. In the first place on the never-yet-resolved riddle of who exactly triggered the actual *coup* of 1966, the transfer of power from President Sukarno to General Suharto. Roosa (2006) has done most of the detective work in unmasking the plotters. At the same time, he has hardly touched on Suharto's rise to power and the explicit use of sexual slander. He mentions "psychological warfare" a few times and dismisses the rumours of castration as nonsense, but he does not reflect on the question of why these rumours were created in the first place and what effects they had in Suharto's creeping *coup*. Why were women's bodies and sexuality singled out? Secondly, a gender analysis is relevant to theories of the formation of the modern Indonesian nation and on nation building in general. If nation building in modern times, as Anderson (1983) maintains, is a project of the imagination, what kind of masculinist imagination has been at work here? Third, this gender analysis of violence is interesting for those who are working on the roots of violence, particularly in Indonesia. Fourth, scholars of the Indonesian women's movement and of gender relations in Indonesia, Asia and elsewhere will find certain elements they can use. It is striking that only this last group of scholars regularly refer to *Gerwani's* history and the ramifications of the sexualisation of persecution in 1965/6 (see Blackburn, 2004a). The other three groups of scholars have generally maintained silence.

One might hope that 30 years after the basic insights into the workings of gender relations became available (e.g. Rubin, 1975; Scott, 1989) scholars would have incorporated this body of work into their basic tool kit, as has happened with many

other theories of social transformation and nation building that have been developed since the 1970s. However, this is not the case. Apart from Roosa's book, discussed throughout this article, I provide two other examples of studies which would have been immensely enriched had they dealt with gender relations and sexual politics.

In 2002, Colombijn and Lindblad published an anthology, entitled *Roots of Violence in Indonesia*. Of the twelve chapters none is devoted to *Gerwani* and the 1965/6 massacres, although several articles refer to the *putsch* and its aftermath to discuss other moments of violence. This is in itself surprising, as with about one million people murdered it ranks as one of the major bloodbaths in modern history and the largest one in Indonesian modern history. It is striking that an analysis of gender relations and the sexualisation of violence is missing, even where the *putsch* is discussed. How is it possible to analyse the "roots" of violence if this critical aspect is ignored? *Gerwani* itself is only referred to twice. Cribb (2002) mentions that *Gerwani* members were among the major victims of the violence unleashed by the Suharto group. He gives no sources and does not elaborate. He does note that the PKI is "demonized," but he fails to mention the sting of this demonisation, its sexual overtones.

Elson (2002) goes a step further, writing of stories of "sadistic tortures and mutilations," using the term "sexual depravity." But he too neglects to refer to any sources that analyse this campaign, and he bases himself not on the most direct primary sources, the army press, but on the much-toned down articles in other periodicals and newspapers. Unable to understand the ramifications of this campaign of "sexual depravity," he concludes that "it is difficult to decide" whether "Suharto really believed ... that the PKI was ultimately responsible for Gestapu..." (Elson, 2002: 180). Why else would Suharto go to such lengths as to construct such gruesome tales and to fabricate "proof" of the alleged depravities of the girls by filming them naked in the prison, some weeks after the murders took place? In the next paragraph, he states that "Suharto must bear final responsibility for the massacres ..." but this conclusion is based on a *post-facto* analysis of the ways the military and their allies went about the killings, not on who masterminded the stories of "sexual depravity" in the first place.

Elson seems reluctant to recognise that Suharto and his allies had deliberately construed the "sexual depravity" of which *Gerwani* was accused. He writes: "... Suharto and his followers made much capital out of the sadistic tortures and mutilations allegedly visited upon the dead or dying generals" (Elson, 2002: 180). The key word here is "allegedly." Who orchestrated the belief in these so-called tortures, if not Suharto himself? Elson's statement is more interesting as on the previous page he had described Suharto being present when the bodies of the murdered generals were uncovered. Thus, he must have seen very clearly at that moment that their crotches were still intact and that no eyes had been gouged out. This is also borne out by the display of the uniforms of the murdered officers in the museum erected at Lubang Buaya. All blood stains are still clearly visible. Yet no blood is found on the crotches.

Another example is a recently published study of state terrorism in Indonesia, by the well-known political scholar Ariel Heryanto (2006). Heryanto's book is an incisive analysis of the consequences of the 1965/6 mass killings in Indonesia. He gives many examples of how only by understanding how the spectre of communism

is manipulated one is able to analyse the social and political dynamics in Indonesia. He supports the thesis that the mass killings of 1965/6 laid the groundwork for the military, authoritarian rule of General Suharto. Fully aware of the power of ideology, he examines two key texts in the continued production of terror in Indonesia, a novel and a film produced in the 1980s. Their title is the same, "The Treason of the 30 September Movement/the Indonesian Communist Party." They are based on the army version of the *putsch* and the violence that followed it and demonised the PKI, legitimising the rule of the army as the saviour of the nation. Millions of students and other citizens were obliged to watch the film. Both film and book thus played a similar role as newspapers and the radio played in 1965/6.²⁸

Though Heryanto (2006: 15) mentions that the film deliberately uses the "horrifying violence in the killings of the seven officers" to demonise the PKI and to portray the murdered officers as ideal fathers and husbands, the author fails to note the sexual overtones of the violence presented in the film. In his definition of state terrorism, and in his further analysis of the impact of state terrorism, a gender analysis is conspicuously absent. Although Heryanto (2006: 3) concedes that this mass terror has been "a crucial force in the formation of the subject identities, fantasies and everyday activities of this nation for decades," he does not dwell on the implications of the creation of the myth of sexual depravity.

This failure has two major consequences. First Heryanto is unable to explain why the women's movement, haunted by fear of being called "new *Gerwani*" was so weakened under the New Order. Women's political agency became suspect, an issue that would be strengthened in later years by the rising tide of Muslim fundamentalism. Second, by ignoring the sexual overtones in the perpetuation of the "spectre of communism," Heryanto cannot explain convincingly the continued power of this "spectre" in the national imagination.

What are the consequences of this neglect of a gender analysis? The most obvious are: (i) the neglect of one of the most pervasive relations of inequality in Indonesian society; (ii) an inability to understand major social phenomena which are greatly influenced by gender relations, such as nation building, violence, social movements, regionalisation, globalisation; (iii) contributing to the continuation of the gender-blindness of the social sciences;²⁹ and (iv) an inability to contribute to the emancipation of all sectors of Indonesian society.

Gender studies within Indonesian studies is still seen as something about women and by women, as if studies on rural relations could only be written by peasants about peasants. Hence, while it is expected that scholars of women's studies are well versed in the literature produced by their "male-stream" colleagues, "male-stream" Indonesianists hardly cite the literature that they considered "women's literature." Why the "male-stream" is seemingly unable to cite from the wider literature on gender remains unclear.

The same silence reigns regarding the beginning of the mass unrest that forced Suharto to step down in May 1989. All accounts dealing with this critical transition mention the student demonstrations and the May riots. In these events sexual politics – in this case the mass rapes of Chinese women – play a significant role. Indeed, it is barely remembered that women marched first to protest against the effects the economic crisis of 1997/8 had on ordinary people (Forrester and May, 1998). On 23 February 1998, these women demanded affordable food and milk for

their children. This was a strong attack on Suharto, for as the self-proclaimed “Father of the Nation,” he could not be seen to be unable to provide for the nation’s babies. After that, women’s organisations, such as *Suara Ibu Peduli* (SIP, Voice of Concerned Mothers), were among the first to forge an anti-Suharto coalition, though they were later eclipsed by the students (SIP, 1999; Wieringa, 2002).

Gender relations and sexual politics can no longer be neglected by the scholars dealing with this deep trauma in Indonesian history. In the bulletin *Setelah Nonton Film Pembantaian* (After seeing the film on the massacres, 14 September 2000), Balinese poet Putu Oka declared: “the mental construction of the community has been destroyed” by the events of 1965/6. Sexual politics form the core of this process of moral decay. Therefore, only with a careful analysis of the sexual metaphors created by the army and used by them to spur on conservative organisations to kill many thousands of innocent people can a process of reconciliation begin.

Notes

- ¹ Nursyahbani Katjasungkana was the first secretary-general of the *Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia* (KPI or Indonesian Women’s Coalition) from 1998 until 2004 and is co-founder of the Association for Women’s Justice (APIK), which by 2010 had 15 local branches. In 2010 she was also the president of the Kartini Asia Network, an Asia-wide network of feminist activists and academics.
- ² Ibu Sulami was one of four members of *Gerwani* and PKI-associated associations to have been tried following the 1965/66 events. These four were not convicted because of their alleged involvement with the murder of the generals, but for their involvement with a movement alleged to have supported the then deposed Sukarno. Copies of their testimonies before the court are held by the author.
- ³ The author spoke in the same session, having been permitted to return to Indonesia after being blacklisted since 1986. At the session the author presented autopsy results showing the lies about the castrations of the generals. Anderson (1987) was the first to draw attention to the document.
- ⁴ Recently the National Human Rights Commission has begun an investigation into the extent of the genocide. By mid-2011, no results have been made public.
- ⁵ This information was gleaned from several conversations with *Syarikat Islam* members in 2004 and 2006. Similar sentiments were voiced by a former leader of *Banser*, the military wing of *Ansor* and heavily involved in the mass killings in Probolinggo (interview, April 2008).
- ⁶ The links to this are: <http://www.fpi.or.id/artikel.asp?oy=sik-24> (downloaded 18 May 2009; no longer available). See also <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/3059/lastri/>.
- ⁷ See <http://www.kabarindonesia.com> (downloaded 29 November 2008). See also <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2008/11/19/0025295/unjuk.rasa.mendukung.film.lastri> [Demonstrate Support of the Film Lastri] of 19 November 2008. Director Djarot believes that the “spontaneous protesters” in the countryside were paid by the secret police to sabotage his film. They created such an uproar that the political leaders prohibited shooting of the film (interview Djarot with Swedish film maker Maj Wechselmann, March 2009).
- ⁸ In discussions with the author, the activist Yenny Rosa revealed that when she was captured in Yogyakarta at the end of the 1980s for selling the books of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, she noticed she was treated with more viciousness than the male students who were picked up with her. The soldiers shouted at her that she was a dirty whore. Only after her release, when she had read about the campaign of sexual slander against *Gerwani*, did she understand where those accusations came from.
- ⁹ *Yasanti* was set up by Muslim feminists. *Kalyanamitra* was initially mainly a women’s documentation centre. *Solidaritas Perempuan* focused on women migrant workers. APIK is a network by women’s legal aid bureaux set up by Nursyahbani Katjasungkana.
- ¹⁰ The allegation is made by Asvi Warman Adam, from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (see Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007).
- ¹¹ Amnesty International cites the one million figure. Cribb (1990) is more conservative; he concluded that it was most likely that around 500,000 people were massacred. Sarwo Edhie, who led the army units that orchestrated the killings, boasted of having reached a total of three million dead (cited in Wieringa, 2002).

- ¹² See the author's interview with Djuhartono (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). The main portent of his information is used in a scene in my novel *Lubang Buaya*, where the murders of the generals took place (Wieringa, 2003b).
- ¹³ Roosa (2006) provides evidence that strongly suggests that this kind of abduction was a tactic often used in Indonesian history and which led to loss of face for those abducted; Suharto, who was Yani's temporary replacement, would thus probably replace him in full. When it turned out that Yani was murdered, Suharto must have been even more convinced that this was his chance for power.
- ¹⁴ All members of the national leadership interviewed emphatically denied that they had in any way been informed of an impending *putsch*. None of them has ever been formally accused, while they all spent many years in prison.
- ¹⁵ For the full interviews, see Wieringa (2002). For the atmosphere within the "PKI family," see the sources cited in Wieringa (2002) and Roosa (2006), especially Hindley (1966), May (1978) and Mortimer (1974).
- ¹⁶ In my novel on Lubang Buaya I took the liberty to fictionalise the construction of this process. There is no proof of who else besides army intelligence was involved. I suspect, however, based on many discussions with survivors of the massacre and people close to the NU and to the rabidly anti-communist Catholic clergy, that NU cleric Subchan and Catholic priest Father Beek may have inspired some of the thinking that went into the fabrications of the lies of sexual torture (see Wieringa, 2003b; Wieringa, 2007).
- ¹⁷ The Swedish filmmaker Maj Wechselmann recently took other interviews with survivors of the camps who told similar stories. Her film "The Women and the Generals" was recently released. See the film's website, <http://thewomenandthegenerals.wordpress.com/2010/01/28/the-film-the-women-and-the-generals/>.
- ¹⁸ The author has not seen the actual text of this document. Mrs Solichah was a member of parliament from 1960 to 1982 and a leader of the NU women's organisation, Muslimat NU (see Blackburn, 2004b).
- ¹⁹ This sensational revelation is contained in an interview with Yusuf Hasyim in which he explains what he learnt from *Mein Kampf* in "The Women and the Generals" by Maj Wechselmann, cited above.
- ²⁰ *Melati* means jasmine. It was the symbol of *Gerwani*, and the kindergartens which the organisation set up were named after this flower.
- ²¹ One of the more spectacular accusations was that Aidit would have given an award to a *Gerwani* girl who would have sexually serviced most PKI cadres (Wieringa, 2002).
- ²² The author has copies of the court testimonies of the four women leaders who were tried. Ibu Sulami and Ibu Sujinah were members of *Gerwani*, the others belonging to the women's wings of the progressive peasant and labour unions. They fled and were captured only when most of the killings were over. They were only ever charged with supporting the pro-Sukarno movement, which was underground as Suharto had banned it. They were all tortured horribly and spent many years in prison. They related the details of their torture in their interviews with the author.
- ²³ President Sukarno was forced to hand over power to Suharto by signing the *Supersemar* (*Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret*, Letter of Instruction of 11 March). The association with Semar is critical. Semar is a *wayang* puppet signifying the trusted servant of the gods, and loyal to superhero Ardjuno.
- ²⁴ This seminar was held on the occasion of the publication of the Indonesian translation of *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* (Wieringa, 2002).
- ²⁵ It is interesting to compare the way Schreiner (2005), a male historian, deals with the Lubang Buaya monument compared with McGregor (2007). Schreiner totally misses the gender elements of the monument, while McGregor provides the most lucid account of the monument I have read so far, incorporating a gender analysis.
- ²⁶ Both puppets are wives of the popular shadow play hero Arjuna. Srikandhi is the incarnation of a male character, Amba.
- ²⁷ Women's groups, such as *Komnas Perempuan*, APIK and the KPI, are fighting these issues, but they seem powerless to change this trend. In a speech which Nursyahbani Katjasungkana delivered at the opening of the V Film Festival in Jakarta on 21 April 2010, she dealt with the impact of these laws. She clearly linked this continuing (and growing) violation of women's rights to the fate of *Gerwani*.
- ²⁸ The film was also shown on television every anniversary of the 30 September *putsch*.
- ²⁹ In 1977 I published my first article on Indonesia, a critique of the androcentrism of one of the major texts on Indonesian history, Wertheim's 'Indonesian Society in Transition' (1956). At that time a

critique on androcentrism was new. By now gender analysis has become a widely used theory and methodological tool.

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